

**Chief of Naval Operations**  
**Adm. Jonathan Greenert**  
**7 September 2013**  
**Remarks at 2013 Tailhook Reunion Banquet**

It's truly, truly an honor and a privilege to be here. I've been so looking forward to finally getting to Tailhook. Because -- well the fact is, most people graduating from any accession source, and if they would admit it, and I'd done this year's ago: they want to fly. And I wanted to be a pilot in the worst way but I had bad eyes. And Al Konetzni got a hold of me and, if you know big Al, he's a submariner and things kind of worked out. (Laughter) And the truth is I wanted to do that. Some of you may know Rosie Rosenberg and Bob Rocker in the bullpen in N-8 and they said "bubblehead, we're going to take care of you, and take you to a real professional organization, we're taking you to Tailhook!" And this was, no kidding, in 1991. (Laughter) You can't make this up. So, my boss who's a nuclear submariner said we're all on the manifest he said, and I said I won't be here this Friday, and he said, "Where are you going?" and I said, "Professional Development, I'm going with the aviators" He said, "nahh, you're staying here bubblehead and work," and so I did. The funny thing is that I get back after, what? I can't do the math, after 22 years! I come here and there are all these spouses and I go, "wow this is really something, and there are babies, they bring children to this." Ladies and gentlemen, I'll get the word out, trust me.

After all this traveling, it's a little cool up here if you don't mind, too much air conditioning up here. (*CNO puts on brown leather flight jacket*) Hounddog McClain got me this, I'm not sure that I've earned it. (*laughter and cheers*) A couple of things I learned tonight. I've given you some of it and I'll give you a few more.

In these times of limited resources I'm always driving toward judiciousness. I think it's awesome that y'all sing the national anthem. I meant that sincerely off the bat. I've tried to engage in every other Navy in the world when they get together and they sing their country's song. And you save money on a band. Why bring a chaplain. We lay our head on our pillow every night and say a prayer why can't we do that?

Quite a few anniversaries lately and this year is the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the all-volunteer force. The finest part of our force is the fact that it's an all-volunteer force, that is our asymmetric advantage. And I think it's a good thing to remember. It's the 40<sup>th</sup> year of the end of Vietnam, returning prisoners of war and you very smartly and very graciously honored the returning prisoners of war, those who have served as prisoners of war here. I think it's astounding, and those of you who spent the money to come out here, I haven't seen anything like this that embraces who you are, what you are about and what so many of you believe in. So many of you served so many years ago to come here and bring in the people who serve today and honor them and they honor you. I think is unmatched and I'm really impressed with that. So what I'm saying this community has lead change for over 100 years and you'll continue to do so I'm sure. The world gets a vote; it wasn't all that long ago that we said we may have to take action in Syria. Everyone was turned to

the Eastern Mediterranean and those four destroyers, but the fact was the Nimitz carrier strike group was the real key. In the building they say, “where are the carriers?”

And thank goodness the Nimitz was available- at the time and she is the key and critical part of it. And that’s the way it’s going to be as long as I can see out there. Our centerpiece of our Navy is that carrier air wing on that carrier in the carrier strike group. I see that all the way out there on the horizon. It’s always good for public debate. To have that and nurture, and I tell my officers that you have to talk about who are out there. You need to be bold about it, express yourself, you have to be sensible about it, and the analytics will always win out. So good on you for that and remember who you are is important and it remains the centerpiece. Carrier aviation has epitomized the Navy for a long time. When the American public thinks forward presence you always see the pictures of the aircraft carriers. It’s in the SECDEF’s office.

I say we have to be where it matters, when it matters. And that is what Nimitz is doing over there, that’s what Truman is doing, and that’s what you have all been doing for a long time. The Tailhooker history really just reads as the litany of our great Navy and what we have been able to do in battle. Coral Sea, Midway, Leyte Gulf, Chosin reservoir.

Leaders like Wayne McClusky in the battle of Midway, Enterprise air group commander on 4 June 1942. So he launches without a fighter escort. If you read the books about Midway you see the guys say, look we’ve got to do something here. It’s very confusing, it’s the fog of war. And he said, I’ve got to go, and so he did. Some of you might remember, and some of you don’t remember, he was getting low on fuel, and he said we’ve got to keep going so we’ve got to find where these Japanese carriers are. So he sees a destroyer, it’s screaming north at flank speed, it’s not maneuvering back and forth; we had our submarines out there. And he said, that’s pretty peculiar, that guy should be zigzagging and it isn’t, I think I’ll follow him. So he finds the battle group, he finds the carriers, and it was his action that boldly led the first attack in the battle of Midway despite the low fuel. Nimitz said afterwards that it was McClusky’s decision that decided the fate of our carrier strike groups and our forces at Midway.

Fast forward a bit to Thomas Hudner, Korean War, he earned the Medal of Honor after he crashed his F-4 Corsair. We talk about the value of a wingman, of Jesse Brown, the Navy’s first African American naval aviator. Thomas Hudner did a valiant attempt to save Jesse Brown’s life as he crash landed there in that cold area, he said I’ve got to go in there to see if I can pull this guy out. He was ultimately not successful, I think we know that, but he returned, I don’t know if any of you know that, maybe all of you know that he went back to North Korea in July to try to recover his wingman.

That’s the kind of people that make up your legacy. Everett Alvarez, who is here and I met tonight, in 1964 Operation Piece Arrow. He became the first prisoner of war in Vietnam, and the second longest period of captivity, nearly nine years. Like all prisoners of war, those that we honored and acknowledged tonight, they kept the faith, they never gave up. That’s our Navy ethos represented well before us, by prisoners of war. So this is

your spirit, these are the people that came before us, we should all have that, any organization should have that, any institution, but you have it and have it in spades, but I've got to tell you that our history we've got challenges, we've got challenges in the Navy, we've got challenges in Naval Aviation. Lot of successes, but we're an imperfect organization, and I recognize that. We've got to realize what we've got to do and get on with it.

Today, for us, it's in the headlines, what we've got to deal with in the Navy, it's sexual assault. We've got to take it on, we've got to figure it out, and it's a challenge for our time. And we've got to focus on it. It happened here at this association years ago and trust me, I read these every day, it can happen anytime and it can happen just about anywhere. It's a safety issue for me; I think our kids deserve a climate of dignity and respect and a good place to work. I think we've got a pretty good strategy in place. I'm working with the Marine Corps Commandant, Jim Amos and I are together on this. We're arm and arm in this. It's about prevention; it's about victim advocacy, getting the good investigation done clearly and fast and holding people accountable. So I want you to know that it has my full attention and I hope it has yours too, those of you out there in uniform. And those of you that support us, I appreciate that.

There are other issues that we're out there tackling. Obviously an unstable security environment -- But that's what those of you that fly do, you take care of unstable insecure environments both in the Mediterranean and Pacific. We've got uncertain budget requirements. Well the requirements are very certain; we've got an uncertain budget that's out there. We'll have a continuing resolution and we'll have sequestration. After twelve years of consistently increasing OPTEMPO, what bothers me as much as anything today is that we've got to be careful- some people don't even have time to write a will because we are driving them to fly every day and, zoom, their off taking care of business. And then we've got others who aren't flying enough. We've got a have and have not situation. For those of you who are here today, it's up to me to get the money and we're going to do it as soon as we can. As soon as we can move the money, we'll do it. But it's on me; it's on "Shortney" [ADM Bill Gortney], it's on outliers. It's not lost on me that we need a balance here and that we need people to do their profession. I'll focus on that. It's difficult, challenging times but it's also an opportunity for us.

We need to leverage what naval aviation does best, be adaptable and flexible- for me it's payloads and platforms. I'm a simple guy; the carrier is the best example of that. The new carrier and the new air wing are perfect examples. The FORD Class re-design, the first in over forty years is on its way. The carrier is designed to last, we know that. The Enterprise remained in service for over 51 years, so you want to talk about platform that can adapt. It's really a prime example, it's our centerpiece. It's remained relevant throughout its lifespan. The air wing of 2012 is very different from the air wing of '62. But it got the job done and it went to the tip of the spear. Nimitz class is at its limits ladies and gentlemen. At its limits of space, weight, cooling and power. It's got a lot of years left, but it's about there. The FORD class provides that room to grow, it's more efficient, it will be operated cheaper and it will save a lot more money over the life of it.

And of course it's got the new systems in it, so we'll bring her in. The air wing is undergoing a similar significant transformation and there's a pretty big increase of information sharing going on. It's something simply astounding going on. I'm kind of obsessed with the electromagnetic spectrum here because it's pretty crowded right now, we're spewing energy into the atmosphere if you will and a lot of people are copying it and tracking us and we've got to get that right. And it's really; the use of the air wing is going to solve that for us. The Growler is quite an aircraft, a capability. I think we have scratched the surface on that, but there's quite a bit more. The Hawkeye is astounding, it can do amazing things and of course the Seahawk. We know about the Super Hornet we know about the F-35 Charlie- that air wing those type model series combined with the lightning bolt and all the slides, getting that network right, the air wing of the future will be quite amazing.

And we have UCLASS coming on. If you were here a year ago, I'd have to tell you that it's not really well defined and we're losing support for it down on the third deck of the Pentagon. Today I tell you that we've got great support, from the Secretary of Defense on down they love that it's an asymmetric capability and something we need to bring in. We'd love to do that. I think it'll be a terrific addition to the air wing. So that transition is happening now. And we've got to assure, and it will assure that carrier aviation is relevant.

Well you know I'm a sub guy up here and I can't leave you with out talking about the undersea domain a little bit. It is an asymmetric advantage for us because it's a buzzword. And that's what I have to do to get money. I didn't say "transformation" because that's out, asymmetric is in. Seriously, we own the undersea domain. And I have empirical data to prove it. I get reports from folks who go out on deployment. The key piece for anti submarine warfare is not the submarine, its aviation -- it's the P-3, it's the P-8. That will be the key piece that helps us maintain our superiority, that will be the kill platform out there. And it's going to be helped a great deal by helicopters, it'll be helped by the Triton which is the broad area surveillance, it'll be tricked out like maritime surveillance hawk and make no mistake about it, it'll be aviation that makes a big difference in our dominance of the undersea domain. So we've got exciting times. We've got a little less money but we'll spend it smartly. We'll go out there and show them what our Navy can do. We have to think about war fighting first, we have to operate forward because that's what we do we're at our best. And I have to make sure that we are ready, that those of you that are out there to operate I need you to be ready when you are called upon. The success is not platforms, we go back to the beginning, and it's the people. It's those that went before you, the folks that laid your legacy, there's a table full of them right here, Hudner, McCluskey, Alvarez. They will live on.

One of my favorite movies, one of my favorite books was the Bridge over Toko Ri. I love the end of that movie. Remember that, the guy is on the bridge and he turns to the admiral and he says, "admiral where do we find such people?" the answer is right here, they were in this room before all of us were in this room, all of them at this table before you, and they're out there in the hinterland. Because as long as we have kids like you and like we have now, and those that are flying today, we'll be all right. So think about it, when you

put your head on your pillow tonight say a prayer for those guys and gals, those who are out there flying tonight, those that are out there steaming. Our brothers and sisters, God bless them, God bless you all, this Navy of ours, this association and for sure, this United States of America. Thank you very much for inviting me.

---

---